Case.	1.17-ma-02004-DAF D0C#. 3433 11	2
1	APPEARANCES:	
2	111 1 111 11 11 10 110 1	
3	For the Plaintiffs:	Peter H. Weinberger, Esq. Hunter J. Shkolnik, Esq.
		Salvatore C. Badala, Esq.
4		Frank L. Gallucci, III, Esq. Donald A. Migliori, Esq.
5		W. Mark Lanier, Esq. Jayne Conroy, Esq.
6		Steven J. Skikos, Esq. Troy Rafferty, Esq.
7		Paul Farrell, Esq. Joseph F. Rice, Esq.
8		
9		
10	For Walgreen Defendants:	Kaspar J. Stoffelmayr, Esq. Kate Swift, Esq.
11		, -
12	For CVS Defendants:	Sasha Miller, Esq. Graeme Bush, Esq.
13	For HBC/Giant Eagle	2001.
14	Defendants:	Robert M. Barnes, Esq. Josh Kobrin, Esq.
15		Scott D. Livingston, Esq.
16	For Defendant Discount	Timothy D. Johnson Fac
17	Drug Mart:	Timothy D. Johnson, Esq.
18	For Rite Aid Defendants:	Kelly A. Moore, Esq.
19		John Lavelle, Esq. Greg Fouts, Esq.
20		
21	For Walmart Defendants:	Tina M. Tabacchi, Esq. Tara Fumerton, Esq.
22		John Majoras, Esq.
23	ALSO PRESENT:	Special Master David Cohen
24	Proceedings recorded by m	echanical stenography;
25		mputer-aided transcription.

1	THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2020, 1:01 P.M.
2	THE COURT: We need to know who's on for
3	the court reporter's record, but I don't need to go
4	through one by one.
13:01:50 5	THE CLERK: Okay. I'll just read it out
6	then who I've heard from. And you can tell me who else
7	you want.
8	Before I before I get much further, I
9	would ask do I have Salvatore Badala for plaintiffs?
13:02:08 10	MR. BADALA: Good afternoon. I'm on the
11	line.
12	THE CLERK: How about Frank Gallucci?
13	MR. GALLUCCI: Yes, I am on the line.
14	THE CLERK: And Linda Singer? Not heard
13:02:18 15	from Linda.
16	How about Paul Hanly?
17	MS. CONROY: It's Jayne Conroy.
18	Paul Hanly will not be on the call today,
19	but I'm here from his office.
13:02:32 20	THE CLERK: Perfect.
21	So now I'm going to go ahead and read off
22	this list.
23	I'll be right with you. More people are
24	joining all the time.
13:02:38 25	So, Judge, for Cuyahoga County, Lake

	1	County, Trumbull County, I have Hunter Shkolnik,
2		Salvatore Badala, Frank Gallucci.
	3	THE COURT: We don't everyone has to get
	4	to Helen.
13:02:58	5	Everyone, make sure Helen knows that you're
	6	on so we can make the record.
	7	We don't need to go through 70, 75 names.
	8	THE CLERK: Okay. How about everybody send
	9	a list to David Cohen? David Cohen will get it to me.
13:03:14 1	0	I know everyone has David's e-mail address,
1	1	and then I will forward it to the court reporter.
1	2	Sue, I will scan the participant list and
1	3	send it to you now. These are the people I am well aware
1	4	of.
13:03:26 1	5	Judge, you can go ahead when ready.
1	6	THE COURT: All right. This is our what's
1	7	been a monthly phone conference in the Opioid MDL,
1	8	particularly the Track One B and Track Three cases with
1	9	the pharmacies and two counties in each of the two cases.
13:03:49 2	0	I received and appreciate the status
2	1	report.
2	2	I've got a number of things I want to
2	3	cover.
2	4	The first one is most important, the
13:04:03 2	5	November trial.

1 I received the defendants' motion or notice 2 of nonconsent. 3 Respectfully, I don't need any lawyer or 4 any party to tell me what our general order says, what it 13:04:28 5 means, how to construe it. I know that. I'm part of the Court. 6 7 at the regular Judges' meetings, all right, so it's 8 not -- it's not a good use of anyone's resources to file things telling me what orders, general orders mean or 13:04:45 10 what to do. 11 The fact is our Court has not had jury 12 trials since the middle of March. 13 We voted a couple of weeks ago, last week, 14 to attempt to begin short jury trials starting September 13:05:07 15 21st with limitations. 16 We're doing one -- well, first of all, 17 we're only doing trials that can be concluded within a 18 We're only doing one trial per courthouse, and 19 these limitations are for September and October, starting 13:05:25 20 September 21st. 21 Then three, if the participants, the 22 parties or counsel are reluctant because of COVID 23 concerns to go to trial in September or October, we're 2.4 postponing it. We're not making anyone do it. 13:05:44 25 But this only applies to September and

October. We've made no decision as to what to do in
November.

Any trials scheduled for November are of

Any trials scheduled for November are on as scheduled, subject to whatever we decide at our October 5th meeting. And we obviously have made no decision. It's September the 3rd.

On October 5th, in the morning, we will decide what we'll do about trials in November and going forward, and we'll base that decision on the Court experience with the September and early October trials and on the COVID numbers for this area of the country.

And that's what we'll do. But this trial is on until the Court decides it's not. And we'll make a collective decision.

All my colleagues were made aware at the last Judges meeting and when this general order was issued that I have a trial scheduled for November 11th. They all are aware of it.

They all are aware that our Clerk's Office sent out, I believe last week, inquiries to roughly 1,000 people inquiring of their availability and willingness to serve as jurors for approximately a month beginning in November. And we're getting those responses in.

So and everyone knows that there are two opioid trials, long opioid trials that Judges in this

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1 part of the country are planning to conduct in October. 2 It wasn't on the status report, but there's an Ohio State 3 opioid trial that visiting Judge McMonagle is 4 conducting -- that's a jury trial -- sometime in October. I think it's Madison County. It's one of the two cases 13:07:41 5 6 that AG Yost filed. 7 And then, of course, there's the MDL trial that is on the status report that Judge Faber is 8 conducting. I think he's locked in two months in West 9 13:07:59 10 Virginia starting sometime in October. That's a bench 11 trial. 12 So other Judges are conducting live trials, 13 complex opioid trials in October. 14 So now since I've raised that, the trial 13:08:20 15 that Judge Faber is conducting in October was originally 16 slated to be a jury trial. I think both sides had 17 demanded a jury, and then recently both sides waived jury 18 and so he's doing the bench trial. 19 This trial, both sides requested a jury, 13:08:41 20 all parties requested a jury. That's fine. But I don't 21 know if anyone -- the parties have discussed jury waiver, 22 but it should at least be discussed. 23 I mean, I prefer having a jury decide these 24 complex cases, but clearly picking a jury, seating a 13:09:04 25 jury, having a jury adds, during COVID, a whole layer of

1 difficulties and dangers that would not be there with a 2 bench trial. 3 I mean, in theory with the parties' 4 consent, a bench trial could be conducted remotely in 13:09:21 5 whole or in part, if the parties consent. The jury trial 6 needs to be in person. We've taken a lot of steps in our court to 7 provide for juries. I've already laid out my courtroom 8 9 with a lot of tables. 13:09:34 10 My plan is not to use the jury box, but to use the gallery for jurors so they can be spread out. 11 12 And there won't be any spectators. The members of the 13 public, the media, will watch the trial in one of two 14 overflow courtrooms. 13:09:52 15 And we're doing the jury -- the voir dire 16 will be done downstairs in our large naturalization room 17 where people can be spread out. 18 So we have -- we have steps to accommodate 19 a jury, but clearly that adds a whole range of issues. 13:10:08 20 So I suggest the parties at least discuss 21 this. 22 I don't know, have you -- if you've already 23 discussed it, and there's not agreement, that's fine. 24 But I'd like to know if you have discussed this. But if 13:10:22 25 not --

1	MR. WEINBERGER: Your Honor.
2	THE COURT: you should do so.
3	MR. WEINBERGER: Your Honor, this is Pete
4	Weinberger for the plaintiffs.
13:10:27 5	THE COURT: Yes.
6	MR. WEINBERGER: We have not discussed the
7	issue of jury waiver with the other side.
8	THE COURT: Okay. All right. Well, that's
9	fine.
13:10:38 10	I suggest that all parties discuss this.
11	And again, you know, it's now set for jury trial and we
12	can handle it and we will handle it, but since the
13	parties in West Virginia agreed to convert from a jury
14	trial to bench trial, you ought to consider it.
13:10:58 15	And again, if you opt for a bench trial,
16	and the parties consent, I I don't see any reason why
17	the entire trial could not be done remotely, if the
18	parties agree.
19	We have the technology. We've all been
13:11:19 20	doing virtually everything remotely for six months.
21	We're pretty good at it.
22	So that's something the parties can
23	consider.
24	The next thing is in the event that the
13:11:46 25	plaintiffs prevail against at least one defendant, there

1 needs to be a second phase of this trial, a bench 2 proceeding on remedy. And, you know, everyone's busy and 3 scheduling things in advance, and I need to find out a 4 little more about it. 13:12:02 5 I quess my first question is will the 6 parties need different discovery on -- for the remedy 7 phase? MR. WEINBERGER: Your Honor, this is Pete 8 9 Weinberger again. 13:12:22 10 The damage or the remedy phase or the 11 abatement phase has been fully worked up, and expert 12 depositions, expert reports and depositions have been 13 done of those experts on both sides. 14 And my only hesitation is to the extent 13:12:51 15 that there's been significant time that has taken place 16 between the reports, the depositions, and ultimately the 17 second phase of trial, there -- there might be some desire to supplement reports and perhaps take some short 18 19 depositions related to any supplementation that changes opinions or modifies opinions. 13:13:18 20 21 But other than that, I think we're -- we 22 would be ready to go into the second phase. 23 I don't know whose phone that is that's 24 going on. 13:13:35 25 THE COURT: That was mine.

1	MR. WEINBERGER: Oh, okay.
2	THE COURT: That's my house phone.
3	MR. WEINBERGER: Oh, okay.
4	THE COURT: Sorry.
13:13:41 5	All right. That's from the plaintiffs'
6	side.
7	Anyone from the defendants?
8	MR. STOFFELMAYR: Yeah, Judge, hi. Kaspar
9	Stoffelmayr for the defendants.
13:13:52 10	I would certainly agree that when we were
11	ready to try the case last year, you know, damages issues
12	were fully prepared, but those aren't that was going
13	to be part of the trial, but those aren't part of the
14	case any longer.
13:14:07 15	As to other abatement issues, I would
16	appreciate if we could come back to the Court on that.
17	It's not something, honestly, that we focused on for some
18	time, and I don't want to speak for everybody else
19	without, you know, having a chance to make sure
13:14:27 20	everyone's on the same page.
21	The other thing I don't know is when other
22	parties were severed out relevant relative to that
23	discovery.
24	So if they may feel that you know, I
13:14:38 25	can't speak for them, but they may feel or may not; I

1 just don't want to get ahead of ourselves, but we can 2 certainly submit a report to the Court within --3 THE COURT: All right. That's fine, 4 Mr. Stoffelmayr. I'd like the parties to discuss this and, 13:14:49 5 hopefully, you can come to some agreement. 6 7 I mean, if you need -- if you need discovery, what it is and roughly how -- how long it will 8 9 take. 13:15:01 10 So I quess my second question is does 11 anyone have a sense of how long this proceeding will be, 12 how many witnesses? 13 I gather it's primarily experts. How long 14 do you think it will take? 13:15:24 15 MR. WEINBERGER: Your Honor, this again is 16 Pete Weinberger for the plaintiffs. 17 It is primarily experts, but there will be 18 testimony from some of the local witnesses for Summit and 19 Cuyahoga who will provide testimony about specific needs 13:15:50 20 for abatement and input they may have given to experts 21 who then did abatement calculations. 22 This is a pure guess on my part, but I 23 would assume that the second phase probably could be done, both -- with both sides' presentations in about, in 2.4 13:16:19 25 about two weeks.

1 MR. STOFFELMAYR: Judge, Kaspar 2 Stoffelmayr. 3 As a -- you know, in the realm of guesses, 4 that doesn't sound like a crazy guess to me, but we obviously would need to discuss it and understand better, 13:16:31 5 6 you know, who the witnesses would be and how many. 7 THE COURT: All right. Well, why don't, as part of your discussions on discovery, whether you need 8 9 discovery, how much, how long it would take, why don't 13:16:47 10 you also just to me -- I mean, ultimately it's my 11 decision on limitations, but I've never conducted 12 a -- I've never conducted a public nuisance trial, I've 13 never conducted a public nuisance abatement -- post-trial 14 abatement remedy proceeding, so I've got no historical 13:17:10 15 knowledge. 16 So if you both believe that two weeks is 17 adequate, then you should tell me, tell me that. 18 And it seems to me that since that's 19 a -- strictly to the Court, if the parties agree, that 13:17:34 20 that can be done by Zoom remotely. But again I quess the 21 parties have to agree. 22 If someone insists on live, then obviously 23 we'll have it live in the court, but you should discuss 24 that, too. 13:17:50 25 And I think when -- I'm going to be

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scheduling the next -- you should include that in the next status report, the result of your discussions on this.

So it would be in the next status report, include your -- whatever you decide on jury waiver for the trial, the November trial, and then your collective thoughts on what this remedy proceeding would look like, again only if the plaintiffs win, but again it's -- it's complex enough that I think we need to sort of plan it out.

And I, at least tentatively, will block out some time, given that there are a lot of busy people involved, so I didn't want to wait too long.

All right. I just saw -- well, I got this week witness -- like, witness designations, and there seems to be vastly more witnesses that have been designated by each side than could conceivably testify at this trial.

Now, I understand you need some flexibility, but the witness lists are so long as to be meaningless.

Remember, each side has only 70 hours for direct and cross-examination, all right. I mean, if you split it in half, 35/35, and your witness -- your direct testimony of a witness averages an hour, that's 35

1 witnesses. All right? Some may be less than an hour. 2 Some will be longer. But if an hour is average, you've 3 got 35 witnesses. 4 I didn't count up how many, but, like, it was multiples of 35 on each side, so I -- they're 13:20:12 5 meaningless to me and, candidly, they're meaningless to 6 7 each side. So I suggest both sides get real. I mean, 8 9 that's -- and the same thing with deposition 13:20:32 10 designations. I just saw this, Special Master Cohen 11 forwarded this to me. "Plaintiffs agree to reducing our 12 affirmative designations to 75 hours and will do so by 13 Wednesday." 14 All right. You're only allowed 70 hours for direct and cross, all right. Having 75 hours of 13:20:50 15 16 affirmative depositions, again, that's way more than you 17 can conceivably ever use. 18 So that's meaningless to the Court, it's 19 meaningless to defendants. I don't even know what the 13:21:09 20 defendants have designated. 21 But I can tell you this: The Court and 22 Special Master have limited time, and we're not going to 23 be wading through hundreds and hundreds of objections to 24 deposition transcripts. 13:21:25 25 And so what's going to happen is if, when

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we get these, I just think there are way too many, I'll just say, "The heck with it, we're not going to have any testimony by depositions; call everyone live."

Again I've said any witness who wants to, can testify by video.

So if there are objections to questions,

I'll rule on them, I'll rule on them live. But the Court
doesn't have the time or the interest or inclination to
be wading through hundreds and thousands of
deposition — objections to deposition
experts — deposition excerpts, particularly since the
parties have grossly overdesignated.

So you've heard me. You figure out what you want to do. But if, again, if you can't agree on some meaningful limitation on this, forget about the depositions altogether and call your witnesses live.

Again, I've said, any witness who wants to testify by video, wherever they are in the country, then put them on by video. I'll tell the jury that we're doing a lot of things differently because of the pandemic. Everyone knows it. And one of the things we're doing differently is we'll have a lot of witnesses by video, and they're to give the witness exactly the same attention as if he or she was sitting right in front of them in the courtroom.

1 All right. The last thing I wanted to 2 cover was to find out -- I mean, we're now two months 3 from trial, and I know you've advised me you've been 4 having settlement discussions, meeting with the mediator 13:23:25 5 Judge Gandhi, and I want to know are you meeting 6 regularly with him and, you know, are you getting 7 anywhere? Because if you're not, 8 9 something -- something isn't right and we need to change 13:23:40 10 the paradigm if you're not engaged in serious discussion 11 now two months before the trial. 12 MR. WEINBERGER: Your Honor, this is Pete 13 Weinberger, and I'll address your comments on the issue 14 of mediation. 13:23:54 15 But before I do, I believe that the 16 supplemental -- I'd call it supplemental Cohen order with 17 respect to CT One B actually helps us address some of 18 your concerns about the significant numbers of witnesses 19 on the witness list. Your order, which required us to exchange 13:24:18 20 21 on September 2nd, is in anticipation of both sides being 22 able to look at those lists and cull them down 23 substantially, and also to address whether or not there's 24 anyone on those lists that has not previously been 13:24:37 25 disclosed or for which we may need a discovery

1 deposition. 2 So I can -- I can speak for the plaintiffs 3 that both with respect to the deposition designations and 4 the exhibit lists, we will be culling them down 13:24:54 5 significantly. 6 As to the depo designations, in part that 7 will be dependent on and -- on our designation of the one live witness per defendant who we are entitled to call 8 9 without regard to issues of subpoena power, as we did 13:25:15 10 with respect to CT One A. 11 So we are mindful -- the plaintiffs are 12 mindful of your concerns, and I can assure you we will 13 address them and have already anticipated addressing 14 them. 13:25:30 15 With respect to the issue of mediation --16 and Joe Rice is on the phone -- he and I and two other of 17 our colleagues, including Hunter, have been involved 18 with -- in discussions with Judge Gandhi. 19 The last discussion that we had with Judge 13:25:53 20 Gandhi was about two weeks ago, and we haven't exchanged 21 information with him since. 22 I hesitate to describe anything about 23 the --

THE COURT: All right. I don't want -- I

don't want to get -- you know, defendants don't want me

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1	involved in mediation at all, but it's appropriate for me
2	to inquire is anything happening, so it sounds like
3	MR. RICE: Judge.
4	THE COURT: maybe it's not at the moment
13:26:35 5	so.
6	MR. RICE: Judge, this is Joe.
7	I think to sum it up from the plaintiffs'
8	side, we do not think that we've made much progress in
9	the mediation, and we have made it known to the mediator
13:26:50 10	that if we're not going to get more progress made, that
11	we would like to terminate the mediation.
12	And that was the last call we had, and he
13	was going to get back with us.
14	MS. TABACCHI: Judge, this is Tina Tabacchi
13:27:11 15	from Jones Day.
16	I can just report that the pharmacies have
17	been engaged on a regular basis with the mediator and met
18	with him by video earlier this week.
19	MR. RICE: We will reach out and try to get
13:27:30 20	a report, Judge.
21	THE COURT: All right. I heard from the
22	plaintiffs that they don't think they've made much
23	progress, and if there isn't much more progress they want
24	to terminate, which they have the right to do.
13:27:45 25	But I'm dismayed by this, that but it's

1 not -- the parties should be able to make progress, okay. 2 That doesn't mean you're going to be able to settle it, 3 but you ought to be able to make progress if both sides 4 are sincere. If you're not, obviously we shouldn't have 13:28:07 5 6 bothered from the start, but I want to -- I want to have 7 something a lot more definite by our next phone call. I expect, I mean, either that you're really 8 making progress or it's been terminated, and if it's 9 13:28:26 10 terminated, then I'm going to press the defendants to let 11 the Court get involved because you've had a good 12 mediator, all right. 13 And, I mean, or, or if the answer is, "We 14 don't want to settle, we don't want to mediate it," well, 13:28:44 15 then you should say so. Okay? 16 I mean, no one has to settle this case or 17 any other. You can try one case, you can try a hundred, you can try 3,000 throughout the country, but no one 18 19 wants to waste any time. 13:28:58 20 So I want to have -- either hear by our 21 next call that you're making real progress, or if you've 22 terminated it and if the, you know, response is that the 23 parties don't want to try and settle, they want to keep 24 trying this one, see how it happens, maybe try others, 13:29:20 25 that's okay.

1	All right. This is my thought for future
2	upcoming conferences. We've been meeting roughly
3	monthly. This is my suggestion, that we have another
4	call three weeks from today which would be September
13:29:49 5	24th, and then we have another call on the afternoon of
6	Monday, October 5th because I will know at that point
7	whether this trial is going to go forward or not based on
8	our based on our Judges' meeting.
9	And I'll let everyone know, and I figure
13:30:15 10	everyone should know as soon as possible, and the soonest
11	we'll know is that afternoon.
12	Does anyone have a problem with that? I'm
13	proposing 3:00 o'clock three weeks from today which would
14	be September 24th, and then 1:00 o'clock, Eastern Time
13:30:31 15	obviously, on Monday, October 5th.
16	MR. STOFFELMAYR: Good here, Your Honor.
17	Thank you.
18	Kaspar speaking. Sorry, Kaspar Stoffelmayr
19	speaking.
13:30:49 20	THE COURT: Does anyone have a real problem
21	with those?
22	I'd rather not wait five weeks until, you
23	know, we can meet again, and I think it makes sense to
24	have the next one right after the Judges' meeting so
13:31:02 25	everyone will know whether we're going forward.

-	1	And obviously, I believe we've already
2	2	heard from the defendants that if, if the Court decides
	3	we're not going to have any, any trials without the
4	4	consent of the parties on COVID-related concerns, then
13:31:23	5	the defendants have already made their position clear.
(	6	But again, no one can predict whether, you
-	7	know, what we're going to decide. I mean, there are
{	8	about at least three or four possibilities.
(	9	We could decide, based on our limited
13:31:40 10	0	experience and the numbers, that we don't want to have
11	1	any trials in November or December.
12	2	We could decide we're going to have trials
13	3	with conditions, the same conditions we've had, or new
14	4	conditions; or we can decide we'll have trials without
13:31:54 1	5	any conditions and just go forward.
16	6	So or something else.
1	7	But we'll decide that on the 5th.
18	8	All right. I think that that
19	9	covered I've covered everything that I had on my list.
13:32:17 20	0	MR. WEINBERGER: When do you want status
23	1	reports, Your Honor this is Pete again for the
22	2	September 24th?
23	3	THE COURT: That's a good idea, Peter.
24	4	Yes, why don't we keep the same, the same
13:32:30 25	5	schedule?

1	This one was submitted at noon
2	MR. WEINBERGER: On Monday.
3	THE COURT: on Monday before.
4	MR. WEINBERGER: Right.
13:32:38 5	THE COURT: So why don't we have one at
6	noon on Monday, September the 21st?
7	And I want it to include the things we
8	talked about, and I think I think that the trial that
9	Judge McMonagle is conducting should be somewhere on the
13:32:55 10	report. It's
11	MR. WEINBERGER: We'll see we'll see to
12	it that it's included.
13	THE COURT: Yes, I think it's
14	within it's not it doesn't involve these, the
13:33:07 15	participants in this trial, so it would be in the section
16	state cases for other defendants. It's the distributors.
17	I believe it's the distributors only.
18	But
19	MR. WEINBERGER: Yes.
13:33:18 20	THE COURT: that's a jury trial and, to
21	my knowledge, it's going forward.
22	Okay.
23	MR. WEINBERGER: That's what we that's
24	what we understand, also.
13:33:26 25	THE COURT: Yeah.

1	Is there anything else that either side
2	wants to wants to raise?
3	MR. WEINBERGER: Not on behalf of the
4	plaintiffs, Your Honor.
13:33:42 5	MR. STOFFELMAYR: Not for the defendants
6	either. Thank you.
7	THE COURT: All right.
8	Judge Ruiz and Special Master Cohen,
9	did did I omit something or is there something else
13:33:52 10	that either of you think we ought to cover?
11	Because I've got many people helping me,
12	and I could easily have forgotten something.
13	SPECIAL MASTER COHEN: I don't think so,
14	Judge.
13:34:08 15	There's many issues that I'm working with
16	the parties on, but I don't think there's anything we
17	need to chat about today.
18	MAGISTRATE JUDGE RUIZ: And this is
19	Magistrate Judge Ruiz.
13:34:16 20	I don't I don't think there's anything
21	else for the parties and the Court to discuss today.
22	THE COURT: Okay. All right.
23	Thank you, everyone.
24	We'll talk to everyone in three weeks, and
13:34:30 25	have a good Labor Day, and everyone stay safe.